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## Art Education for Citizenship: Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed as a Method for Democratic Empowerment

- This article discusses advantages and limitations in associating art, education and citizenship.
- For the discussion presents a literature review of concepts and data from several areas of knowledge
- Discusses advantages and limitations of current dominant educational paradigms.
- Presents alternative educational paradigms more viable to human psychological functioning.
- Describes the theatre of the oppressed method as a practice merging art, education and citizenship.

**Purpose:** To contribute for the ongoing discussion about associations between art education and citizenship education, presenting Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, as a theatre method that exercises active democracy by means of promoting epistemological development merging Art, Citizenship and Education.

**Design:** Drawing from a selected set of relevant concepts and data in the fields of psychology, education, arts and performance studies, amongst others, the advantages and limitations of the artistic practice of theatre are analyzed in terms of its impact in epistemological and socio-cognitive development.

**Findings:** A literature review shows several studies that evidence the benefits of artistic practices, namely theatre, in several indicators. Despite these evidences formal educative contexts, rooted in traditional pedagogic paradigms, resist to the entrance of arts, such as the performative, in school curricula, as well as other interactive practices indispensable in the promotion of participative citizenship.

**Research implications:** Present existing methods alternative to formal education, exemplified by the method of the theatre of the oppressed, that aim to develop art, education and citizenship in one same practice.

**Practical implications:** Evidence the need to reconsider formal education curricula with the objective of enhancing epistemological development, empowerment, autonomy and active citizenship.

### Keywords

Performative arts, psychological development, theatre of the oppressed, arts education, active citizenship

### 1 Introduction

Citizenship, education and art are multifaceted terms and concepts of difficult consensus, which demonstrates their complexity as subjects of discussion. Their meanings change according with different contexts and throughout times, assuming sometimes even divergent forms (e.g. Charlot, 2013; Loring, 2015; Lucey, Lycke, Laney & Connelly, 2013; Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In this paper, its intended to demonstrate the possibility of associating contents of these concepts in a complementary logic and present Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO) method (1974) as an example of how these concepts can be merged in one same practice. For this task, an interdisciplinary literature review will be presented, departing from concepts of citizenship associated with values of participatory democracy and psycho-social development (e.g., Kuttner, 2015; Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004); of education associated

with epistemological development and increasing complexity of thought (e.g., Dewey, 1916; Piaget, 1941; Sprinthall, 1991; Charlot, 2013); and of art associated with creativity, which implies sufficient conditions and freedom for the aesthetic expression (e.g., Siegesmund, 2013; Silva, 2016; Vigotsky, 1925).

The demand for democratic, participatory citizenship, poses an enormous educational challenge for it will require the enhancement of cognitive complexity of individuals, sense of community and autonomic capacities, namely through the promotion of epistemological, human and psycho-social development. Evidently, formal education could play a very significant role in contributing for the achievement of these objectives. But, unfortunately, when rooted in traditional pedagogic paradigms that, amongst other things, perpetuate oppositions and dichotomies between mind and body (Dewey, 1916), education will be very limited in its potential to develop autonomy and active citizenship. On the other hand, literature shows evidence that the artistic and creative practices, especially those rooted in holistic (embodied) perspectives about human psychological functioning (such as theatre), seem to be particularly adequate for the objective of developing complexity of thought and active citizenship. Given the constraints and resistances that formal education still poses today to modifications in its traditional dominant pedagogic paradigms, the TO method is here presented as an example of a theatre practice that, having been designed for informal and non-formal educational contexts, accomplishes the

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achievement of merging art, education and active citizenship. It is argued that this methodology reunites artistic qualities that largely contribute for the promotion of psycho-social development, engaging and empowering citizens in the construction of a better collective future.

## 2 Citizenship and complexity of thought

In a broad sense, citizenship is related with the democratic principles that construct inclusive societies, where each individual has enough means, space and freedom, to develop his/her own meaningful singular story and inscribe it in a broader collective social narrative. Classical authors such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) have called this interactive process of meaning-making between individual and collective, the "social construction of reality". In addition, authors such as Gilbert Simondon (1958) or Bernard Stiegler (2009) have named the process of construction of each individual self as a singularity - only possible in quality collective contexts - as "technical and collective individuation". In this framework, the substance of the concept of citizenship consists in devising conditions for the construction of inclusive societies, allowing the emergence and expression of meaningful singular individual narratives within the frame of a broader collective narrative. This definition may reflect one of democracy's main goals in the sense that each citizen should be allowed the opportunity to become a significant actor in the construction of progressively better social environments, but also poses a problem since individualism, today's dominant form of socialization, progressively destroys the possibility of collective narratives (Levi-Strauss, 1958, 1978) and, simultaneously, the possibility of *individuation* (Stiegler, 2009) and meaning-making (Lacan, 1953 [1980]; Silva, 2016). This means that, in today's world, as individualism further becomes the hegemonic form of socialization, citizenship may be at risk.

For example, Whestheimer and Kahne (2004) conceive three different categories of what is to be considered good kinds of citizenship according with different political perspectives: the *personally responsible citizen*, the *participatory citizen* and the *justice oriented citizen*. In a short illustrative example of the type of actions associated to each one of these categories, it can be said, figuratively, that the *personally responsible citizen* is a law abiding person that, for example, engages in voluntary activities such as contributing with food and clothes for the less fortunate. The *participatory citizen* tries to understand the mechanisms behind the functioning of laws and institutions, engaging in social life activities of the community such as organizing the food drive for the less fortunate. The *justice oriented citizen* acts critically, striving to understand problems in their root and intervene for the construction of fairer and more equitable societies, engaging in activities that question the reasons behind the existence of the less fortunate and demanding social transformation. As the authors highlight, the first category does not have a direct relation with democratic principles and, in fact, in most non-democratic regimes, the *personally responsible citizen*

would classify as a good citizen - in partial opposition with the *participatory citizen* and in frontal opposition with the *justice oriented* one. However, being that the acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness in dissention is a prevailing principle in democracy, it should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive. Instead, as in other conceptual schemata (e.g., Damásio, 2003; Perry, 1970; Piaget, 1941), these categories of good citizenship are organized according with a principle of increasing complexity where the latter categories (more complex) integrate the previous (less complex). In other words, the accomplishment of each of these roles of good citizenship requires differentiated levels of complexity of thought, for each proposes a different degree of active intervention in the social plan: the *personally responsible citizen* structures his/her actions by mostly following and agreeing with what dominant others proclaim to be the common good; the *participatory citizen* seeks to understand and master the dominant concept of common good, without however questioning, but rather acting in accordance with it; the *justice oriented citizen* questions the origin and meaning of the dominant idea of common good and acts in order to construe more meaningful alternatives.

The same principle, related with increasing complexity of thought, can be found in psychology, namely, in the constructivist tradition that by conceptually merging ontology and epistemology, proposes a holistic approach to the psychological functioning of human beings (e.g., Arciero & Bondolfi, 2011; Guidano, 1991; Mahoney, 1991; Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988; Maturana, 1988/1997; Piaget, 1941 [1965]). For example, William Perry (1970) conceives a scheme of psychological development that describes, through a sequence of nine stages, how thought changes from simple to complex forms (which involves not only cognition *per se*, but also autonomy, meaning-making and ethical and epistemological development). The nine stages show how simple *dualistic* thinking - where an individual judges correctness when in accordance with the authorities of knowledge (scientific, legal, religious, governmental) -, develops into *relativistic* thinking -where the individual recognizes the co-existence of many authorities of knowledge and being unable to compare them has to face the difficulty of choosing. Finally, in the next stage of development, *commitment in relativism*, the individual understands and accepts that in a democratic world of multiple truths, each one is responsible for comparing alternatives, choosing and *committing* throughout life. In Perry's scheme, the passage from the *relativistic* to the *commitment in relativism* stage is an example of epistemological development, comparable with a process described by Piaget as *reflective abstraction* and is related to the conquest of a certain degree of autonomy, after a *relativistic* stage of conflict (crisis) - *cognitive conflict* (vd. Piaget, 1972 [1977]). In this sense, the individuals' different stages of complexity of thought, evidently interfere with the quality of the democratic environment, being that the problem of mutual exclusion only appears in the lower stages. Although the categories of good

citizenship are evidently not mutually exclusive, it must be underlined that the task of the *justice oriented citizen*, implying higher levels of complexity of thought, is of utmost relevance for the fulfillment of the purposes of democracy and the general improvement of quality of life.

### 3 Creative education and performing arts

Answering the original question posed by Westheimer and Khane (2004) "What kind of citizen?", for example Kuttner (2015) showed that it is precisely in promoting the critical thinking of the *justice oriented citizen* that art education seems to be more relevant. In convergence, other evidences seem to point out that the purposes of democracy may be better achieved when the sufficient conditions for psychological and epistemological development are created (e.g., Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012). Evidently, education plays a prominent role in addressing the democratic demand for epistemological, as well as psychological and social development, and one of the most effective ways of accomplishing these goals is through creativity (Charlot, 2013; Silva, 2016; Valqueresma & Coimbra, 2013). Creativity (from the latin *creare* – *give existence to*) is what allows the emergence of the new and it would be acceptable to say that creativity (responsible for aesthetic production) is one of the human faculties more closely connected with the construction of alternatives which is the basic premise for democracy's freedom of choice. In addition, the discovery of new life alternatives, solutions and possibilities of synthesis, both at individual and social level, constantly requires and produces further integration of these new elements in the individual's epistemological systems, increasing their complexity.

Within the artistic domain, literature shows that the performative arts, mainly focused in addressing and exploring the possibilities of expression through the body, allow access to the most profound *implicit contents* (Freud, 1900 [2006]). By transforming the *implicit* (subjective) into *manifest contents* (objective) through symbolic processes of sublimation (Lacan, 1953 [1980]), for example, the theatre practices, are particularly accurate in promoting connections between body and mind (*embodiment*), allowing a multiplicity of symbolic discourses to be produced by the body (e.g., words, sounds, actions and basically all forms of expression). In the last decades, several studies presented empirical evidences of positive relations between theatre and psychological development in areas ranging from education to psychotherapy or neuro-aesthetics (e.g., Calvo-Merino, Jola, Glaser, & Haggard, 2008; Franklin, Fernandez, Mosby & Fernando, 2004; Respress & Lufti, 2006; Orkibi, 2010). In 2006, a study conducted by Wright, with 23 students, using various measures, showed that drama education highly enhances self-development and promotes personal and social development; and more recently, a study conducted by Silva, Ferreira, Coimbra and Menezes, (in press) with 222 actors and directors, tested a measure adapted from of William Perry's scheme, that showed significant differences in

complexity of thought according to the level of experience in theatre. It is difficult to enunciate all the qualities that underneath this relation but they are certainly related with certain conditions that, when reunited, promote global (holistic) development, being likely that these conditions are intrinsic to artistic practices.

Relying on previous contributions from classical authors such as Dewey (1916), Mead (1934) or Piaget (1972 [1977]), Sprinthall (1991) has systematized the sufficient conditions under which the cognitive and psychological development occurs: individuals should be constantly involved in *significant role-taking action* experiences, balanced with relevant opportunities for *reflection* in a *relational* and emotionally charged *context* that is both supporting and challenging of his/her world visions. Recently, empirical evidences of the accuracy of this model were found, for example, in the context of civic and political participation (Ferreira, Azevedo & Menezes, 2012). And, in addition, research by Silva (2016), has shown the existence of formidable convergences between these conditions systematized by Sprinthall and the minimum elements for theatre making (e.g., Grotowski, 1965 [1975]; Brook, 1968 [1996]). A convergence that extends, however, to most artistic domains (Goodman, 1978), evidencing that it may not even be a question of intentionality towards psychological development, but rather, an intrinsic quality to the practice of artistic activities (Silva, 2016).

### 4 Art or traditional pedagogy

From an historical point of view, traditional pedagogy (from Plato, to the catholic church, to Descartes, amongst many others) has been developing its processes and methods within a dualistic paradigm that, for centuries, has been systematically opposing the mind and the body. As a consequence, the general aim of the traditional pedagogic efforts has been directed towards strengthening the mental disciplining of the "corruptness" of nature, namely, the bodily emotions and desires. What is today called education has been molded through the centuries, mostly within strategies that address the task of teaching how to resist the body's desire in order to normalize behavior (Charlot, 2013). Art, on the other hand, departs from a different principle for it has been closely connected to sensitivity, being, therefore, an accomplice of the body, even when controlled by norms (Gil, 1981 [2008]). In this sense, two opposing principles are identified, within which most citizens have been educated throughout times: traditional education aims to strengthen the mind in impeding the manifestations of bodily emotions and desires; art, with a more holistic understanding of the human psychological functioning, aims to transform thoughts, emotions and desires into aesthetic forms, through action, by processes of sublimation.

Although nowadays more permeable to the introduction of changes, the traditional pedagogic paradigms are still very rooted in the education of western contemporary societies (Charlot, 2013), inducing the (sometimes

obsessive) dominance of an idea of constant need to *Control* (e.g., mind over body, self over other). It may well be in this sense that authors such as Giorgio Agamben (1996 [2000]) figuratively affirm that it is the “concentration camp” and not the “Greek Polis” what constitutes the basis of western contemporary societies, adding that art encloses the only possibility for the forthcoming of a political community, capable of constructing more creative, autonomous and free societies.

### 5 Democracy and cultural citizenship

In Europe, many countries have transitioned, from authoritarian to democratic regimes (e.g., Iberian countries, former-soviet republics) over the last decades, and have strongly tried to emphasize the promotion of democratic and European citizenship, namely through formal education. Between 2010 and 2011, Menezes and Feirreira (2012) conducted a study based on data from thirty European countries that aimed to understand contents, principles, intentions and key-concepts of civic education curricula in European countries. Apart from the distinct terminologies (e.g., civic education, education for citizenship) the study meaningfully showed that this subject was included in the curricula of schools in almost all European countries, with the general purpose of educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society. On the other hand, non-governmental organizations (NGO) surveyed in the same study referred that “in spite of an official discourse very centered in the promotion of citizenship and the active participation of citizens, there was little effort in the creation of opportunities for the daily exercise of democratic citizenship. Without this practice, civic education becomes effectively impossible” (Caetano, Rodrigues, Ferreira, Araújo & Menezes, 2012, p. 40). It must be recognized that although formal education plays a significant role in promoting citizenship, the places where we practice and learn how to become citizens go way beyond the scope of school (Biesta, 2011; Delanty, 2003). To construct effective democracies, there must be conditions for the full participation of its citizens and, in this sense, the UNESCO Portuguese Commission (2006) highlighted the importance of providing access to art education from an early age, to increment cultural participation, develop individual capacities, improve the quality of education and promote the expression of cultural diversity. Previous studies have also shown plausible possibilities of association between art education and citizenship education, although the difficulties of enhancing such association within the framing of formal educational contexts are recognized (e.g., Kemperl, 2013; Kuttner, 2015; Lucey, Lycke, Laney & Connelly, 2013; Nicholson, 2005[2015]; Siegesmund, 2013). Nevertheless, promoting access for the citizens to a better understanding of the world of art could play a very significant role in terms of citizenship and human development. In the words of Kemperl (2013:111): “through familiarity with the contents of contemporary art, we can realize the objectives of active citizenship.

Contemporary art is unique in recognizing and critiquing truly current issues that are excluded from media coverage. It identifies the issues as they appear and anticipates their consequences”. By engaging in developing cultural citizenship, democracies may encounter a path that leads citizens to the active construction of better societies on their behalf, related with freedom of expression, choice and inclusiveness towards difference (Kuttner, 2015). As we have seen above, following this path will demand, from the citizens, the ability to create meaning out of diversity and dissent-tion and one of the most plausible and effective ways of creating these conditions is through the promotion of complexity of thought, which means, epistemological development (Ferreira, 2006; Parker, 1984; Perry, 1970).

### 6 Beyond formal education

The association of data and scientific evidences presented, firmly supports the idea that performative arts (namely theatre), focused in the bodily transformations within a collective context, are particularly gifted in contributing to epistemological development – an indispensable condition for the development of quality democratic citizenship. According to Charlot (2013:29), “in the creative process, art assumes a point of view over the world, creates new forms and expresses a sensibility at the same time, singular, social and universal”. If art is a cultural construction resultant from the creative labor of different groups of individuals, creativity is the act of exploring possibilities between the self and the world that, through processes of sublimation, creates a diversity of symbolic discourses where human beings can find personal meaning. On the other hand, theatre, empirically demonstrating the democratic possibility of co-existence of a diversity of ontologies in continuous transformation and development, presents alternative meaningful worlds that can be inhabited and transformed (Goodman, 1978; Valqueresma & Coimbra, 2013). Construing a diversity of new worlds during the process of meaning-making, the creative act produces transformation, not only, in each accepted plan of reality but also in the very notion of ontology. It is within this diversity of possible alternative realities that the exercise of choice emerges, giving form to one of the great intents of human culture: the quest for liberty and free determination. Drawing from contributions of several authors on psychological development, Valqueresma and Coimbra (2013:144) clearly affirm that “Educating in art should be envisaged as a real and viable possibility of conjugating education and creativity, with the purpose of promoting psychological development of individuals to its maximum level”. It should be, however, noted, that formal education, despite recent efforts, is still very rooted in the pedagogic dualistic tradition that perpetuates the opposition between mind and body. From this perspective and considering that normative formal educational contexts are still not completely attuned with the artistic practices, the next section will present Augusto Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed* as a theatre method designed to promote epistemological deve-



lopment and democratic empowerment. This is a practice designed to overcome the limitations imposed by the constraints of most formal educational programs, taking theatre practice a step further in the intention of structurally merging art, education and citizenship.

### 7 The theatre of the oppressed method

Inspired by Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970) and mainly rooted in the aesthetics of Bertolt Brecht and Constantin Stanislavski (vd. Boal, 2000 [2014]), Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974 [1979]) begins as an educative experience, part of the 1973 Peruvian alphabetization project (Alfin). The underlying principle was to offer the disempowered, analphabet, oppressed population of Peru, possibilities of expression, meaning-making and socio-cognitive development through the collective practice of theatre. From an aesthetic point of view, Boal's method proposes a reconfiguration of the traditional Aristotelian poetics, where the spectators delegate in the actors the satisfaction of their need to transform desires into actions. Through the empathic process of *catharsis* (Aristotle, 335 *bc* [1958]), the citizen-spectator should relieve his/her desire and therefore abdicate from the need to act. Intending a profound transformation of this traditional role attribution between actors and spectators, Boal has taken further Brecht's (1957 [1964]) intention of transforming passive "spectators", into "actors" capable of actively change the course of events. As Boal stated (1974) if we consider that, in the Aristotelian poetics, the dramatic action *substitutes* the real action and in the Brechtian poetics the dramatic action *enlightens* the real action, in the poetics of the oppressed, the dramatic action *is* real action. For the spectator is invited to actively intervene and change the course of dramatic events in real time, this proposal evidently carries a metaphor: if the passive spectator can become an actor that changes the course of dramatic events, the passive citizen is also capable of acting in changing the course of events in the world s/he inhabits. This set of premises is deeply connected with the concept of cultural citizenship, a concept that is concerned with the development of diverse cultural practices and identities alongside with full participation in cultural and political life (Kuttner, 2015). Developing cultural citizenship concerns the right and capacity of people to develop and pass on diverse cultural traditions and identities while participating effectively in a shared cultural and political arena (Miller, 2001, 2002; Turner, 2001; Wang, 2013). To achieve these same objectives, Boal conceives a theatre method that aims to: a) democratize the processes and practices of theatre making, allowing self-expression, creativity and development through theatre; b) democratize the means of theatre production allowing autonomy over the plurality of emerging and socially engaged artistic discourses.

The methodology is divided in four different stages of development according with a principle of crescent complexity, similarly to the schemas presented above (e.g., Perry, 1970; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004): "knowing

the body"; "rendering the body expressive"; "theatre as language"; "theatre as discourse". The first stage, "knowing the body", consists in the involvement in a series of exercises, through which, everyone starts to get acquainted with the limitations and possibilities of its own body, acknowledging previous social deformations and considering possible paths of recovery. The second stage, "rendering the body expressive", refers to the involvement in a series of games through which each person becomes able to express him/herself exclusively recurring to the body and abandoning more usual daily forms of expression. The third stage, "theatre as language", starts to refer directly to the specificity and originality of this theatre practice (in relation to other theatre aesthetics) for it involves the participation of the spectator in the construction of the dramatic action, again in crescent complexity stages ("Simultaneous dramaturgy"; "Theatre Image"; "Theatre debate/forum"). The idea that the passive spectator has the possibility to act and positively interfere in the course of the dramatic action becomes clear in this stage. Within the premise that the passive spectator (passive citizen) can act and intervene in the dramatic, societal and political change processes, the fourth stage, "theatre as discourse", affirms the merging of former rigid dualistic notions of the roles of actors and spectators in a newly formed concept "spectator-actor". This stage consists in the systematization of series of simple (and non-onerous) possibilities of presenting the emerging artistic discourses (e.g., "Invisible Theatre"; "Journal Theatre" amongst many others). These possibilities are to be used in accordance with the need to discuss certain themes or rehearse collective actions, allowing autonomy, freedom and independence on behalf of their creators. As we will see, these stages are structured in an epigenetic logic of increasing complexity, where the next stage integrates all the previous stages, very like other developmental schemata and theories (e.g., Damásio, 2003; Perry, 1970; Piaget, 1972).

### 8 Developing complexity of thought: Body and mind; Self and other

Addressing the problem of body-mind discontinuity posed by traditional pedagogy, the first two stages of Boal's methodology are mostly preparatory and approach the body in a re-educational perspective. In operative terms, the purpose is to help each participant to become aware of his/her most basic and structuring source of knowledge about him/herself and the world that is the body. This basic premise is deeply connected with what recent literature describes as *embodiment theory* (e.g., Laakso, 2011; Smith & Sheya, 2010). For a long time, cognitive sciences were unable to explain human development processes and the main reason was that the mainstream trends, in attunement with traditional pedagogy, insisted in conceptualizing and cultivating a dichotomous relation between the conscious mind and the sensory-motor processes of the body (Liimakka, 2011; Smith, 2005; Smith & Gasser, 2005). It is indeed through the senses of the body that each

individual becomes able to perceive and explore the world, building a collection of experiences (emotional, tacit and concrete) that will later be integrated into one's consciousness. Individuals will thus devise patterns (forms, concepts, abstractions) becoming apt to structure, understand and construe the empirical world they inhabit (e.g., Arciero & Bondolfi; 2011; Guidano, 1991). Although the proposal that sensory-motor processes influence and constitute cognitive processes is a return to the principles of Piaget (1972 [1977]), only more recently has this idea been confirmed by research in the cognitive sciences (Iverson, 2010; James, 2010; James & Maouene, 2009; Kelly et al., 2002) and also in neurology (e.g., Draganski et al., 2004; Lindquist, Wager, Kober, Bliss-Moreau & Barret, 2012) and neuroaesthetics (Calvo-Merino, Jola, Glaser, & Haggard, 2008), namely by functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI).

It is today clear that body and mind endlessly interact forming a continuous whole. To promote a good human psychological functioning, we must overcome the dichotomies and embrace the dialogic forms of body-mind interaction, just as it should happen in democracy regarding relations between self-other. Aiming to develop body awareness and understanding, the TO method proposes a collective explorative space where the body has enough freedom for spontaneous expression with its peers. As a consequence of this particular type of collective socialization through processes of acknowledgment and differentiation between self/other start to occur, modifying self-construction (Decety & Sommerville, 2003). The creative exploration of the bodily processes through self-expression (passage from implicit to explicit content *vd.* Freud, 1900 [2006]; Lacan, 1953 [1980]) and the hermeneutic process of interpreting those expressive signs, enables integration of experience into conceptual patterns that will later translate into language (Guidano, 1991). This will allow each individual to explain, communicating with his/her peers, the sensations experienced by the body, bringing the subjective to the social plan of reality, evidencing the epistemological dimension of this process. In addition, the establishment of relations between peers through communication, enables not only the self-recognition of previous embodied implicit epistemological structures (including what Boal calls "social deformations") acquired in social or working contexts (Derrida, 1967 [2006]; Stiegler & Neyrat, 2012), but also provides possibilities of modification, both at psychological and social levels. If it is through the body that we first come to understand and structure our knowledge at a tacit level - which is why we can only explain with propriety things that we have experienced -, modifying the sensorial stimulus that the body receives, will transform the structures that give form to our understanding, enabling a transformation of perspectives, behavior and the very notion of self. In practical terms, the bodily exploration that Boal proposes allows individuals to autonomously recognize their own "social deformations", such as *embodied* notions of self, resultant from *instrumentalist* processes (Stiegler, 2009). The *embodiment* of such notions is typical in post-

industrialized societies, and inevitably entails the destruction of subjective knowledge as well as social and cultural capital. This destructive process was firstly identified by Marx as *proletarianization* (1858 [1969]) and tends to induce individuals to understand themselves through the reduced parameters of the utility and productivity of their working skills. Within the TO method, this self-recognition is accompanied by the exploration of new possibilities of self-construction, in the collaborative and associative context of theatre. An environment where individuals, by exploring other forms of self-expression and relation with other individuals and elements of the world, have enough space and freedom to recognize that they enclosure possibilities of doing, thinking and being, that go way beyond the scope of their productive skills. Jacques Derrida (1967 [2006]) referred these alternative contexts of self-construction, as spaces of freedom where individuals can inscribe their personal *grammars*. Spaces that allow what other authors would call *individuation* processes, that is, technical and collective processes through which humans can reclaim their status of singular and irreplaceable beings (Simondon, 1958 [1989]; Stiegler, 2009).

## 9 Discussion

Getting to know one's own body implies a primary approach to the understanding of our own resources of knowledge, which is a first step towards epistemological autonomy. In this sense, the body should be intentionally implicated in every stage of the process of epistemological development and every educational process should begin by its creative understanding. Unfortunately, only in recent history the body has entered the formal education curricula, and even so, not the creative body at first, but the disciplinary one within the boundaries of physical education (Charlot, 2013). In fact, creative performing arts curricula started to become more frequent as extra-curricular arts education programs started to show good results in several *soft skill* indicators (e.g., Franklin, Fernandez, Mosby & Fernando, 2004; Respress & Lufti, 2006). The first two stages of Boal's methodology provide considerable self-acknowledgement through bodily experimentation and understanding, which is common to all physically based theatrical practices (e.g., Grotowski, 1965 [1971]; Stanislavski, 1936 [2009]). This creates the basic conditions for the success of the next two stages of crescent complexity, where the aim is to gradually participate for a collective change process. It is in the third stage ("theatre as language") that the TO methodology marks a difference regarding most of the aesthetic proposals in theatre, for it consists in allowing the spectator to intervene in the onstage dramatic action. The increased complexity of this task is evident for it starts to convene psychological, social and political dimensions for the construction of collective realities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It is a systematization marked by three progressive degrees of audience participation:

a) In the first degree (Simultaneous Dramaturgy), the spectator is invited to share a story to be interpreted by the actors. The group of actors improvises the story onstage and keeps on playing until the point where they stumble into a problem that requires a solution. In that point the audience is invited to present possible solutions to be immediately attempted onstage.

b) The second degree (Image Theatre) is much more intervening. After discovering a consensual discussion theme of a given group, the participants are invited to express their opinion, but instead of using words they are invited to create a silent image, sculpting the bodies of the other participants in the more detailed way possible. Each participant can express his/her opinion, discussing the theme by modifying the image until the point where the whole group agrees in an image that is the physical representation of the theme. After the group construes the "real image" (a consensual representation of the situation as it *is*) the same process is used to construe an "ideal image" (the situation as it *should be*). With these two images in mind, it is possible to invite each participant to develop a "transit image" an image that can transform the "real situation" into the "ideal situation". All this debate is made by the "sculptors" and through the "sculptures", without words.

c) In the third degree (Debate Theater - Forum), the participants are asked to share a story containing a problem (social or political) of difficult solution. The situation is acted out, presenting the problem and proposing a possible solution. When the solution presented does not reunite consensus from the audience, it is announced that the play will be presented again exactly in the same way, but this time, any member of the audience can substitute one of the actors and try to act out an alternative solution. This way the spectators get to experiment the passage of its own theories into actions that are immediately confronted in the collective plan.

Whilst the aesthetics of the third stage, requiring action and critical thinking, is marked by the dynamics of discussion and interpersonal negotiation in real-time, the fourth stage "theatre as discourse" is marked by the need of intervening collectively, discussing certain themes or rehearsing certain transformative actions, to be introduced in larger social contexts - a task that, again, implies an increase in complexity. To address this purpose, Boal suggests several simple forms of presenting theatre plays according with the need to discuss certain themes within the social domain. Some of these simple formats include: "Invisible Theater", "Journal Theater", "Myth Theater" and "Rituals and masks" (amongst others). The fourth stage represents a passage from the intimate to the public sphere. Spectator-actors are those who introduce in the public space relevant themes, involving the community in discussing matters of its own interest. The same principles that allow the emergence of conscious and active spectator-actors are now bound to be expanded to the public sphere, helping to develop participative communities, citizens capable of intervening and transform the future according to their singular and collective needs. This form of theatre widely explores different possibilities of interaction between self and world. An exploration that conducts to an increase of

knowledge about the diversity of versions of reality that human collectives construe among themselves, as well as the different possibilities that this faculty of construing realities enclosures.

Having been devised to be practiced by individuals both with and without previous theater skills, this methodology has nowadays reached a considerable impact. The practice engages a significant number of practitioners in more than seventy countries, and not only in the context of community theatre but also in intervention contexts such as education, psychology, social service or occupational therapy, amongst many others, evidencing positive developmental results in several indicators (e.g., Betiang, 2010; Boehm & Boehm, 2003; Sloman, 2012; Ramos & Sanz, 2012). In a time when art seems to have become markedly psychologized (Jarzombek, 2000) the TO method is a form of recovering the meanings that, through art, emerge from collective contemporary life.

## 10 Conclusions

In this article it has been argued that although there are different discourses about the meanings of citizenship and art education, their concepts and practices share numerous affinities, purposes and complementarities. Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" has been proposed as an example of an artistic methodology that intentionally merges artistic and educational practices for enhancing citizenship by promoting psychological development and sense of community in its diversity.

Addressing questions that democracy poses in terms of dissention, it is our proposal that instead of being envisaged as problems, dissention should be seen as an expected consequence and expression of the fact that every human being is unique and irreplaceable. Although individualism, today's hegemonic process of socialization, is one of the key elements responsible for inducing citizens into interpreting human diversity as a problem, thus endangering democracy and citizenship, literature shows evidence that this difficulty can be easily addressed by effectively promoting the epistemological development of citizens, namely, enhancing critical thinking and complexity of thought.

Evidently, epistemological development is within the realm of education, but, again, literature showed evidences that the domain where cognitive complexity can reach its highest levels is through art education. Augusto Boal's method was found to be one of the best demonstrations of how the purposes of art, education and citizenship can converge in a same practice, evidencing the common goals that the construction of culture has been pursuing throughout human history: individual and collective freedom and self-determination. One of the main political resources to promote citizenship is art education and nevertheless, despite all scientific evidences, it must be recognized that even in its best format, formal education gives little emphasis to modern creative educational approaches. This article intends to highlight that, to promote democracy, citizenship and human development, there is urgency in bridging body and mind, art and science, self and other in

the educative processes. Considering the scientific evidences and history of education until today, the remaining question could be how these elements should be articulated for the engagement of citizens in the active construction of better quality societies, or, as posed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004): what kind of citizen do we want? In our opinion the answer can be found in the suggestion offered by Bernard Charlot (2013:17): "to think of art, not as a resource to educate, but rather of education as a path to become an artist". It may well be that the time has come to give art a fair chance in the construction of a better collective future.

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#### Endnote:

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